

# GOSPEL OF YOHANAN

## Chapter 1b

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As we go further into the Gospel of Yohanan, we will refer to this first great section again and again. This segment holds the foundation of one's belief. The Word was with God and the Word was God; He came to dwell with us that we may behold the glory of God. He died and resurrected for us that we might have everlasting life. Nothing can match that!

Reading and pondering over the first verses of this book of God is like experiencing grace after grace—like the waves of the sea, one after the other, blessing after blessing, revelation after revelation. These three words “*grace for grace*” are found in verse 16. They are like a bank statement that one receives and finds out that his account is being filled daily and the funds are constantly ready to be used.

### **John 1:16**

*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.*

Here, the word translated "for" literally means "over against," or "in place of." One grace is given and another is there waiting to replace it; we are always being replenished as we respond to God. We, believers, are spoiled! And most of us do not even know it. As we strive to follow Him, we are called to look forward and to anticipate great blessings in our walk with God.

What is grace? If there is any single word which is distinctively biblical, it is the word *grace*. The whole concept is framed with an undeserved quality—something which we believers have received and which we could never merit—something which God chose to do, simply because He loved us. Someone said that grace is everything for nothing to those who don't deserve anything. Just think about it, if God dealt with us according to truth, no one would be able to survive. Because of God's love, an unlimited amount of grace is given to us. This grace is found in His fullness; it is found in Yeshua.

We were just told in **verse 14** that the Word is *full of grace and truth*, and this is what we find in Yeshua—grace and truth—and in abundance.

Again we are reminded of the reason why this book was written.

### **John 20:31**

*but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

To have *life in His name* does not only mean to be saved, but to live with Him; to live according to His truth; to have life in Him and with Him. In fact, *life* is a key theme in John's Gospel; it is used thirty-nine times.

In **John 8:12** Yeshua says:

*"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.*

Being that *fullness*, Jesus is also portrayed as the water of life and the bread of life. He is life itself, as He says in **John 14:6**

*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*

We are told, right at the start, that all this grace and all these benefits are offered to us, on a continual basis. It is my prayer that we will be blessed by the words found in this part of the Gospel and that we will experience this great grace from our God.

Just prior to the first Coming of the Messiah, John the Baptist appeared on the scene; his mission was to be a witness. He represented the body of believers belonging to the dispensations preceding ours. As we read in **Matthew 11:13** where Jesus says of Him:

*For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.*

It is as if the Old Testament stopped with John the Baptist. In fact, John spoke of himself, in **John 3:29**, as the friend of the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom is Yeshua and the bride is the new believers who were to come, the Church. A friend of the bridegroom was, at the time, only an assistant who made arrangements for the ceremony. Likewise was John's task, as he prepared many hearts to receive Yeshua. His witness ends in **John 1:34**

*And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.*

How did he witness Jesus? First his witness is seen in **verses 19-27** as he testifies to the religious leaders who held the duty to be the first to recognize the Messiah.

In **John 1:19** we read:

*Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"*

During his witness, John was asked pertinent questions by the Sadducees and the Pharisees because they could not make sense of his mission. After he denied being the Messiah, they asked him in **verse 21**

*"What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."*

In **verse 25** the Pharisees further asked him:

*"Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"*

The Jewish leaders knew that Elijah was to come before the Coming of the Lord as **Malachi 4:5** teaches:

*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*

Elijah, in fact, comes before the Second Coming as we see it in **Revelations 11:3**

*And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.*

According to **Zechariah 13**, a messianic chapter, it is written that there will be many prophets that will come and pretend to be prophets and dress as Elijah.

**Zechariah 13:4**

*And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive.*

This is the same thing that John the Baptist and Elijah wore as we see in **2 Kings 1:8** and **Mark 1:6**.

**2Kings 1:8**

*So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."*

**Mark 1:6**

*Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.*

We know that many false prophets came at the time of Jesus. Many also pretended to be messiahs because many Jews expected The Messiah at that time, according to the dates given by Daniel in **Daniel 9:23-27**.

But John the Baptist denied being Elijah. They further asked him if he was *The Prophet*. This had reference to the Prophet that Moses promised in **Deuteronomy 18**. This Prophet was the Messiah Himself.

**Deut.18:15, 18**

*The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,*

*I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.*

“A prophet like Moses” is in the sense of one filling the office of prophet, priest and king. But this special prophet would not be like any other prophet, including Moses, because of the divine authority vested in Him. See what it says in **Deuteronomy 18:19**

*And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.*

Yeshua fulfilled this office of Prophet while He was on earth. So the religious leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees, were not ignorant of the coming of the Messiah or of Elijah. This shows us that they deliberately denied the Messiah. But while John the Baptist said that he himself was not the Messiah, Yeshua came with a startling statement about John in **Mark 9:13**  
*But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.*

How can we understand this statement?

Well, if you are a postmillianist or an amillianist, there is no way you can properly interpret this passage. This statement can be understood only if you properly divide the different time periods found in the Scriptures. Many people just mix the time periods together and present the Gospel as one of those unrealistic pictures like “Mr. Potato Head,” where you can put the eyes in the belly, an arm in the head, or a foot at the place of the hand. Thus one can move everything around to fit one’s own interpretation. Such is the conduct of the replacement theologians; the ones who want to do away with Israel and conclude that today Israel is an accident of history and that the Church has replaced Israel.

In reality this passage makes a correlation between John the Baptist and Elijah. They both have the same task: to prepare the way of the Messiah. John the Baptist prepared the First Coming; Elijah will prepare the Second Coming. So, if one recognizes Jesus at His First Coming, he does not need the testimony of the second witness-Elijah.

This is why Jesus says in **Mathew 11:14**

*And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.*

This means that John the Baptist fulfilled the task of Elijah, if you believe in Jesus. And as believers we can say that John the Baptist is our Elijah, since we have recognized Yeshua as the Messiah and we will be spared the trials of the Day of the Lord. Furthermore, this is where Elijah will be found as Malachi said and as we see in Revelations 11.

Since the Church will not need the witness of Elijah and since it will not be going through the Tribulation period, John the Baptist becomes our Elijah. This might appear complicated, but in fact it is very simple if one divides the Word according to the different periods of time contained therein.

We have another example of two different dispensations being placed one next to the other.

In **John 1:17**

*For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*

While one can see God’s grace through the law, the law was a display of God’s demand for holiness; something no one could follow. So grace came through Yeshua, who paid the penalty demanded by the law.

But, apart from all this, there are much easier things to comprehend concerning John the Baptist. He stands as an example for us as he had such a spirit of humility.

In **John 3:30** he said these famous words:

*He must increase, but I must decrease.*

John was at the height of his ministry but he refused all fame, satisfied in knowing he had fulfilled his task. Bonar, a bible commentator, once remarked that he could tell when a believer was growing and said: “In proportion to his growth in grace, he would elevate his Master, talk less of what he was doing, and become smaller and smaller in his own esteem, until, like the

morning star, he faded away before the rising sun.” And that is true; it is true of all men and women of God who are growing in the faith.

There is another person, this time in the Old Testament, who showed such a spirit. Remember Jonathan, the son of King Saul; he had a great future as the heir of a king. Yet he was willing to decrease so that David might increase, because he knew that God had chosen David. These two men are great examples for us to follow.

Of course the greatest example of humility is found in the Messiah, especially when He washed the disciples’ feet. He did so during His last night on earth while He knew that Judas was going to sell him for thirty pieces of silver and that Peter would deny Him. Furthermore, the disciples were fighting among themselves as to who among them should be the greatest. What did Yeshua do? He took a towel, girded Himself like a slave, took a basin of water, stooped and washed their feet.

He said in **John 13:15**

*For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you*

The short mission of John the Baptist explains what is happening in the next verses, as we see the disciples of John leaving him and joining Yeshua.

Let’s read **John 1:35-37**

*Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.*

*And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"*

*The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

Notice what is happening here. After John the Baptist points to Jesus and calls Him the Lamb of God, two disciples immediately left him and went to Jesus. While this might seem rash, it is precisely the way it should have happened. Because by leaving him, it is clear that the disciples understood John’s message and that John’s mission of presenting the Messiah was being fulfilled. Right at this point, when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, we shouldn’t have had any more of John’s disciples, because his mission had ended. But things were not that simple, because many kept on following John the Baptist, even after his announcements. Those who did not leave misunderstood John’s message and went on to create new branches of religion. At some point, they even argued against Jesus instead of following Him.

In **Matthew 9:14** we read:

*Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?"*

John’s disciples were siding with the Pharisees.

We read in **John 4:1** that they put one group against the other.

*Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John*

They must have said to the remnant of John's disciples: "Look, Jesus came to usurp his authority." But this is not only given to us as a historical account—there is a much deeper truth here—even before the Church was born, a Christian denomination was born. Just as false witnesses preceded John the Baptist, so was the true Body of the Messiah preceded by what looked like Christianity.

The message is even enhanced when we consider the first words that Jesus addresses to the two disciples that left John the Baptist to follow Him—words that speak to each one of us. He asks them a question that we ought to ask ourselves as well as others who call themselves Believers or Christians. See what Jesus says to His first disciples:

**John 1:38**

*Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" ...*

Wouldn't you have expected Him to say: "Hey, I am so glad you are following Me. Come, I will heal you and make you so rich....."

But He asks them: "*What do you seek?*"

I remember, when I first read these words, I thought they were so uninviting. But they are significant and very piercing, as they force us to re-evaluate why we are followers of Yeshua.

So, what do *you* want from Jesus? What do you expect of Him? Do you believe for the right reasons? Have you joined a congregation or church because you ...

- need a community?
- want a husband or wife?
- are lonely?
- were taught from your youth that you have to attend?

All of the above are not bad in themselves, but all these could be fulfilled at any community centre. So, if these are the only reasons, then why there?

Throughout the years, I have seen many people who have joined our congregation and the body of the Messiah, as a whole, for the wrong reasons. Let me tell you that if you have not accepted to join the body of the Messiah because of the Word of God, because of what Yeshua did for you or because of what the Spirit of God is doing in you, then you might be headed for a great disappointment.

There is no compromise when it comes to the word of God. We stand firm in who we are because of what is written in the Scriptures; that is the starting point. Anything that goes contrary to the Word, whether it is a denomination, a congregation or even a close member of yours, should never be put above God.

When Jesus was forsaken by many of His disciples because they were disappointed with Him, Jesus then turned to the twelve disciples that were still standing with Him and asked them in

**John 6:67**

*Do you also want to go away?*

And there they gave Him a great answer:

**John 6:68**

*But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

This is that anchor that should hold us down in our faith: the *words of eternal life* contained in the Scriptures. In order to be like those disciples who followed Yeshua, you need to answer the question: Who is Jesus for you?

Is He a Teacher... a Prophet... a Philosopher?

He is all of the above, but He is much more than that. If you have difficulty with that, then it is very possible that you will one day depart as well.

See what Nathanael exclaimed when he recognized Yeshua:

**John 1:49**

*"Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"*

Notice the article "the", not "a" Son of God or "a" King of Israel. To Nathanael, Yeshua was the One and only Son of God and the only true King of Israel. The way we see Yeshua affects our walk and our work.

Hudson Taylor was interviewing some young people who had volunteered for the Lord's service. He asked several practical questions to find out how well qualified they were for the life they were anticipating:

"And why do you wish to go as a foreign missionary?"

"I want to reach others across the sea because Christ has commanded us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," one replied. Another said, "I want to go because millions are dying without ever having heard of Jesus, the only One who can save them." Others had similar answers. Hudson Taylor looked at them thoughtfully for a moment and then said.

"All of your motives are good, but I fear they will fail you in times of severe testing and tribulation—especially if you are confronted with the possibility of having to face death for your testimony. The only motive that will enable you to remain true is stated in 2 Cor. 5:14. Christ's love constraining you will keep you faithful in every situation."

There is one thing we find in common among the chosen disciples; they were all busy, none were idle. In the Bible, God never goes to the lazy or the idle when He chooses men or women for His service. He goes to those who are already at work, the busy individuals.

- Moses was busy with his flock at Horeb.
- Gideon was busy threshing wheat by the winepress.
- Saul was busy searching for his father's lost beasts.
- David was busy caring for his father's sheep.
- Elisha was busy plowing with twelve yoke of oxen.
- Nehemiah was busy bearing the king's wine cup.
- Amos was busy following the flock and raising sycamore fruit.
- Peter and Andrew were busy casting a net into the sea.
- James and John were busy mending their nets.
- Matthew was busy collecting customs.
- Saul was busy persecuting the friends of Jesus

When Jesus asked the first two disciples why they were following Him, they replied by asking Him in **John 1:38**

*"where are You staying?"*

Maybe their question was to express their willingness to follow Him.

**John 1:39**

*He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying.....*

They followed Jesus, but where was Jesus staying? –Nowhere really. It is interesting that when a scribe wanted to follow Jesus, he asked Him the same question and Jesus answered him and said in **Matthew 8:20**:

*"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*

This is not to say that Jesus didn't have a bed where He could sleep. The message is that, in this world, there is no room for Yeshua. You ought to know this, if you are a believer. It also tells us that the life of a believer is not that of comfort and luxury. Are you willing to follow a person like that? The scribe in **Matthew 8:20** appears to be unwilling to change his life and so Jesus answers accordingly. But He did not object to the first two disciples' request to follow Him; He knows the heart of man.

One more thing we should not miss is that, in the book of John, the first mention of the word *Jew* is found in **John 1:19**—the first of the sixty seven times it will be mentioned. But, unfortunately, the translations have wronged this word. John the apostle is accused of always using the term "the Jews" in a hostile manner. This is because we bring our modern understanding of the word and force it into the Scriptures. A biblical perspective would account for the fact that the whole of the Gospel is a Jewish story; Gentiles are barely mentioned in the Gospels. In light of this, when the word "Jews" is used, it is not to differentiate Jews from Gentiles, but to differentiate one group of Jews from another.

In fact there were two main groups of Jews: those from the north, the Galileans—eleven disciples were Galileans—and those from the south, the Judeans (Greek word for those from the territory of Judah). The term Jews was originally applied to those from Judah as in **2Kings 16:6**. Then, late in the Diaspora the term Jews was used for all Jews as we see in **Esther 2:5**. In the Gospels, when they were back in the land, the Judeans within themselves used the term Jews to refer to the religious leaders as they were the ones perceived as representing all Jewry.

So when John used the term Jews, he wasn't pointing to the Judean Jews; he was actually referring to a certain group of Jews.

Let's look at an example in context:

In **John 5:16** we read:

*For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.*

Who were these Jews? Where they all the Jews? Were not the disciples Jewish? The Jews here were the religious leaders.

If there is a book that is pro-Semite, it is the Gospel of John. While it is hostile towards those religious leaders who misled Israel, it is profoundly pro-Semite, as God profoundly loves His Chosen People.

Now, we are about to see something great; every disciple that came to believe in this portion of the Scriptures did so through the testimony of others. Let us see how this happened.

**First** we see the first two disciples in **John 1:37**

*The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

Through the testimony of John, these disciples believed and followed Yeshua. Incidentally, one of them was Andrew and the other could very well be John, the author himself. Note that John the Baptist is only called *John* in this Gospel and never *John the Baptist*, as in the other Gospels. This is so for the simple reason that John the Apostle never mentions himself in his Gospel, demonstrating true humility; whereas in the other Gospels *the Baptist* is included to avoid confusion.

So what was that first thing that Andrew did when he learned about Yeshua?

**John 1:41** says:

*He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).*

According to the Greek here, the first thing he did is tell his family and thus he led his brother, Simon Peter, to Yeshua.

He then went to get his friend Phillip. Therefore he started first with his family then he went to his friends.

Reading the translation of **John 1:43**, it seems that Jesus found Philip.

The NKJV reads:

*The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."*

But the ASV rendering is:

*On the morrow he was minded to go forth into Galilee, and he findeth Philip: and Jesus saith unto him, Follow me.*

Based on the ASV translation, it is then possible to conclude that Andrew brought Philip to Yeshua. Then Philip went and told Nathanael and brought him also to Yeshua.

This is how the Gospel started to spread. We see here that everyone who got saved at the beginning was through the testimony of others. Doesn't that put a little pressure on you to do the same?

Also, when Matthew first believed he organized a party.

**Matthew 9: 9, 10**

*As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.*

*Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.*

Where did they suddenly come from? It is because Matthew was a tax collector and he probably called them all to meet Yeshua; he prepared a supper for them. I believe we are given timeless hints for evangelism here.

In the last verse of Chapter 1, we see important words here that concern our position in Yeshua and our work in Him. Yeshua was speaking to Nathanael, who, I believe, stands for all believers.

**John 1:51**

*And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*

The words *most assuredly*, in the original, are *Amen, Amen* emphasizing the joy of Yeshua over this new believer. Yeshua holds our position in Him dearly.

Here, He speaks of Himself as the Son of Man which is in reference to **Daniel 7:13**.

*"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven!"*

This was a known title given to the Messiah, the one that brought the High Priest, in **Mark 14:63, 64**, to tear his clothes and call it blasphemy when the Messiah spoke of Himself as the Son of Man.

In **John 1:51** Yeshua makes a reference to a dream that Jacob had in **Genesis 28:10-12**, where he dreamed of a ladder; here, Jesus identifies Himself as the Ladder.

Let's go to that passage to better understand what Yeshua meant.

**Genesis 28:10-12**

*Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.*

*So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.*

*Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.*

First Jacob came *to a certain place*. Actually the Hebrew is more specific; it says *the place*. It was a place that was known to Jacob—so it seems that he purposely went there. This place must be important because, the word *place* is used six times in the story. But we do not know where it is. However, what is interesting is that Jacob later calls this place Bethel (*The House of God*) and he also calls it *The Gate of Heaven* in **Genesis 28:17**. This was a place of prayer for Him. We each have our Bethel, our gate to heaven which is our place of prayer. This place was also called *Luz* (almond tree) in **Genesis 28:19**. The rabbis have an interesting commentary for this passage:

“As the nut has no mouth [opening], so no man could discover the entrance to the town.” This is nice imagery.

What did the ladder represent to Jacob? What did he understand? In the dream, the ladder represented a link between heaven and earth, as it was on earth and it reached up to heaven. Now, it is in **John 1:51** that we fully understand this ladder, as it represents the Messiah—that link between heaven and earth.

But this is not all, it goes even further, and the story here also links Jacob to the disciples. Was not Jacob, through his children Israel, responsible for showing the way to that ladder? But now that Yeshua has come, the believers who compose His spiritual body here on earth have the task of pointing to that Ladder by giving them the good news. Jesus told Nathanael in **John.1:51** *Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*

This previously closed way is now opened, as the Servant of the Lord became the Suffering Servant and opened the way. Just as the ladder represented the focal point for the work and purpose of Israel—this priestly nation—so was the task of the disciples. Now it is the task of the believers to point to that Ladder.

There are five names in the New Testament given to those who have put their faith and trust in Yeshua.

The first is *Disciples*, who are known for their knowledge.  
A second name is *Believers*, who are known for their faith.  
The third is *Witnesses*, who are known for their testimony.  
A fourth one is *Saints*, who are known for their holiness in Christ.  
The fifth is *Brethren*, who are known for their love for each other.

As the first witness, John the Baptist pointed to Yeshua and twice called Him “The Lamb of God.” Notice what he says in **John 1:29**  
*.... Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*

The word sin is in the singular form, signifying that Yeshua came to deal with the whole question of sin. It is true that He saves us and washes us from our sins, but here the singular form of “sin” brings us right to the core of the problem. See what it says in **1Cor.15: 54, 55** where we are brought to the last stroke of sin. Speaking here of the aftermath of the Rapture and the Resurrection of the believers, we read:

*So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"*

Death is sin’s ultimate strike—it is its victory, but Yeshua gave the last stroke in stripping evil of its final beat.

In the early 1800's, President Andrew Jackson issued a full pardon to George Wilson, a man sentenced to be hanged. Wilson however refused it. But could he legally refuse the President's pardon? The Supreme Court declared, "The value of the pardon depends upon its acceptance. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must hang." And Wilson was hanged.

The Lamb of God has come and was the sacrifice for everyone's sins; however each individual must first receive this forgiveness.

One more thing about Jacob – Do you know that many commentators said that when Jesus used the word *guile* in **John 1:47**, He was comparing Jacob to Nathanael. He was comparing a vile man to one who had no deceit. This is truly a very long shot and I believe it stems from the Jewish stereotyping found, so often, in many commentaries. One well known commentator paraphrased what Jesus told Nathanael by saying: "Here is an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob."

This same commentator, whom I still respect for his insight on other parts of the Bible added on Jacob's deception toward Isaac: "one said: *In the previous chapter we saw Jacob doing one of the most despicable things any man could do.*"

One of the most despicable things a man could do?!! What about Peter who denied the Lord three times? Why not forgive Jacob as we forgave Peter? What about David who committed adultery and murder? Does not the Spirit of God testify of Jacob's faith, in **Hebrews 11:21**, and with Israel?

*By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. (Hebrews 11:21)*